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FLOOR DEBATE

April 15, 2003 LB 435

Bishop of Lincoln, and Lawrence J. McNamara, who is in Grand Island. This letter supports LB 435, increase in the minimum wage, and it makes a very compelling argument. I write, says the letter, on behalf of the conference to urge you to support this legislation. The modest adjustment it proposes for the minimum wage is justified, timely, and important. As a matter of public policy, LB 435 is rooted in two key principles of social justice; namely, implementing a preferential option for the poor, and upholding the dignity of human work and its contribution to the common good. It is unjust to allow minimum wage employees to experience such sustained erosion in purchasing power; that is, the ordinary way individuals and families meet their material needs and community obligations. LB 435 also deserves your support because an increase in the minimum wage would disproportionately benefit those most in need of greater purchasing power. A 1998 Economic Policy Institute study found that households in the bottom 20 percent of the income spectrum which receive only 5 percent of total family income, receive 35 percent of the total benefits of the last federal increase in the minimum wage, meaning that the poorest segment of society receives the greatest benefit from the minimum wage. And this study does not deal with school kids, but families. The EPI study also found that 70 percent of those affected by that last increase were 20 years of age and older, 70 percent, 20 and older. And more than half of all teenagers earning minimum wage...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: ...are in households with below-average incomes. Thank you for your attention and consideration. Please vote to advance LB 435 toward enactment so that this important, timely and necessary proposal can be fulfilled. We all know that if you're talking about trying to jump-start an economy, you put money in the hands of those who are going to spend it. The poor spend all of their disposable income, and disposable means all of it. It is spent. There is nothing for saving. You can't even make it from the first part of the month to the last part of the month. I have too many people on this floor who had the philosophy of a senator who stood on the floor of the U.S. Senate and said all of us have been poor, and